(a 48)

Monk's House,
Rodmell,
near Lewes,
Sussex.

Sunday

As the usual confusion has arisen as to the final arrangements were, this is to say that the Woolves Expect to dine at Charleston on Sunday next. They hope the Quentins, or anyone, will come & see us any day Except Monday or Friday And we're very jealous for the last last night before ye moved Elsewhere.

Love

with reference to the Chicago show, & my introduction, it struck me that it would be possible to use Rogers article on you, & also his article on Duncan, much more effectively than anything I could write. They would only need a little introductory — And this would relieve me of the onus & discomfort of Nepotism

(for meaning of this word, consult Quentin)

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1938

Monks Horne,
Wednesday, 28th Sept.

I was very glad to get your cards. I dont know whether you are at Caris, or if this will reach you but write on the chance. At the moment we're waiting to hear the Broadcast of Chamberlains speech in the House this afternoon, so dont know for certain if we're going to war or not. It looks like it: anyhow you'll know by the time you get this, so there's nothing to be said. We were in London Saturday & there Everyone took war for granted. They were digging trenches in the Parks, loud speakers were telling one to go & be fitted for gas masks, & of course there was the usual hurry & .... Here the B.B.C. announced that Hitler has asked Chamberlain to Munich! It's an immense relief. Lloyd has rushed out to talk Peace & so on. However you'll have heard this. We think it must mean

that there ought to be a compromise. God knows what.
I was saying London was appalling yesterday. Kenyon
Mankin suddenly rang up ~~on~~ ~~the~~ the morning before I said
the Labour Party wanted to come up at once & try to
arrange a liaison with the Liberals. Do we had to go
for the night. Of course driven me off his hysterical
outbursts. There were endless meetings, telephones & so on &
nothing done. We're staying here for the present.
John taken over the Ren for Monday. It may of course
have to close down, & he moved to Fieldhead — but ah's now
in the melting pot. We've had innumerable visitors —
Noel Olivier, Judith, Clive, Raymond Janie: no, we're
two near London for peace. Not much gossip, only
Eternal war talk. Noel very solid badgerly &
dependable: my God daughter a nice little elf. The
Charleston atmosphere is metallic & brittle: as for
Janie she never comments — not even a nuisance.
Raymond I can't cotton to, though his virtues are as
prominent as his nose. Tomorrow we go to
Tilsmeghant to discuss politics with Harold.
So sorry I regret your immensely: & the loss of your
which I meant to use in work. The silent chattering.
Please let us know your plans, & if we can help in
any direction. We had meant to ~~tour~~ travel our
books in the west, then make a flying visit to S. Remi —
both, it looks even possible again. But our Estatement —
here: the Carpenter come to talk it over — may be
ill founded. ~~Eyes~~ I don't suppose you'll get this: no end.
& count on a letter
Julian's book is doing unexpectedly well in the shops. & by. Considering the crisis

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HAMILTON 2/10/64

a 47

To Vanessa Bell

1938

1st October. Monks House.

Your letter has just come. I scrambled off a very hurried letter to you last Wednesday, half thinking you'd be marooned somewhere, and thus not get it. Now still in a hurry and therefore typing to save your old eyes I will continue
~~xxxxxx~~e the narrative. I daresay its an old story now; but no doubt you will excuse repetitions. Never never has there been such a time. Last week end we were at Charleston and very gloomy. Gloom increased on Monday. It was pouring. Then in the morning Kinglsey Martin rang up to inist that L. must come to London at once and make a desperate attempt to unite labour and liberals--to do what was not obvious. But he seemed desperate, and so we flung a nightgown into a bag anf started. In London it was hectic and gloomy and at the same time despairing and yet cynical and calm. The streets were crowded. People were everyhwere talking louldy about war. There were heaps of sandbags in the streets, also men digging treches, lorries delivering planks, lous spekers slowly te~~xxxxx~~ driving and solemnly exhorting the citizens of Westminster Go and fit your gas masks. There was a long queue of people waiting outside the Mary Ward settlement to be fitted. L. went off at once to see K.M. I discussed matters with Mabel. We agrrreed that she had better go to Bristol--whether she has or not i dont yet know. Then L came back and said Kinglsey was in despair; they had talked for two hours; everybody came into the N. S office and talked; telephones rang incessantly. They all said war was certain; also that there would be no war. Kingsley came to dinner. He had

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smudges of balck carcoal round his eyes and was more melodramatic and histrionic than ever. Hitler was going to make his peech at 8. We had no wireless, but he said he would ring up the BBC after it was over and find out the truth. Then we sat and duscussed the inevitable end of civilisation. He strode up and down the room, hinting that he meant to kill himself. He said the war would last our life time; also we should very likely be beaten. Anyhow Hitler meant to bombard London, probably with no warning; the plan was to to drop mombs on London with twenty mimutes intervals for forty eight hours. Also he meant to detroy all roads and railways; therefore Rodmell would be about as dangerous as Bloomsbury. Then he broke off; rang up Clark, the news man at The BBc; "Ah--- so its hopeless..." Then to us, "Hitler is bawling; the crowds howling like wild beasts." More conversation of a lugubrious kind. Now I think I'll ring up Clark again...Ah so it couldnt be worse...To us: No Hitler is more mad than ever... Have some Whiskey Kingsley, said L. Well, it dont much matter either way, saidK. At last he went. What are you going to do? I asked. Walk the Streets. Its no good--I cant sleep. So we clasped hands, as I understood for the last time.

Next morning Tuesday every one was certain it was war. Everyone, except one poor little boy in a shop who hadlost his head and was half crying when I asked for a packet of envelopes (and he may have been in some sort of row) was perfectly calm; and also without hope. It was quite different from 1914. Every one said Probably we shall

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win but it'll be just as bad if we do. I went to the London Library to look up some papers about Roger. I sat in the basement with the Times open of the year 1910. And old man was dusting. He went away; then came back and said very kindly, "Theyre telling us to put on our gas masks, Madam" I thought the raid had begun. However, he explained that it was the lloudpseaker once more addressing the citizens of Westminster. Then he asked if he could dust under my chair; and said they had laid in a supply of sand bags, but if a bomb dropped there wouldnt be many books left over.

After that I walked to the National Gallery, and a voice again urged me to fit my gas mask at once. The Nat Gallery was fuller than usual; a nice old man was lecturing to an attentive d crowd on Watteau. I suppose they were all having a last look. I went home, and found that L. had arranged that the Press was to go on; but the clerks to go away into the country if they liked. Then Miss Hepworth the traveller said ~~ak~~ the shops were mostly resfuing to buy at all, and were mostly going to close. So it seemed we should have to shut down. The clerks wanted to go on, as they had no place in the country; and of course no money. We arranged to pay wages as long as we could--but plans were vague. Mrs Nicholls said she should prefer to lie in the trench that was being dug in the square; Miss Perkins preferred to sit in the stock room, which she had partly prepared with mattresses &c. Then, after lunch, an American editor aarrived to ask me to write an article upon Culture in the

PTO

United States. We agreed however that culture was in danger In fact she said most English authors were either in Suffolk, or starting for America. In Suffolk they were already billeting children from the East end in cottages. Then Rosinsky came; he thought he had a visa for America and was going to try to go at once. Then Mrs Woolf rang up to say she was going to Maidenhead if she could get rooms. Then an express arrived from Victoria Occampo who had just landed from South America, wished to see me at once, was trying to fly to America and what could she do with a sister who was ill--could we advise a safe retreat? Also Phil Baker and others rang up Leaonard. With it all we were rather harssased; what should we need if we were marooned in Rodmell, without petrol, or bicylces.? L. took his mackintosh and a thick coat; I Rogers letters to you, and a packet of stamped envelopes. Then we had to say good bye to the press, and I felt rather a coward, as clearly they were nervous though very sensible; and they had no garden. But the Govt; asked all who could to leave London; and there was John in command. So off we went. It was pouring terrific torrents; the roads packed; men nailing up shutters in shop windows; sandbags being piled; and a general feeling of flight and hurry. Also it was very dark; and we took about three hours to get back, At ten oclock Mr Perkins knocked and entered with a box of gas bags which he fitted on us. No sooner had he gone, than Mr Jansen came with another box. He said that children were arriving from the East End next morning. Sure enogh, next day, ---but I wrote to you and told you how we had the news of the

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Prime Minis ters sensational statement--- we thought it meant anyhow a pause-- well, after that, Mr erkims came and said the children were coming--9, 000 had to be billeted in Sussex; fifty in Rodmell; how many could we put up? We arranged to take two. By that time, the nightmare feeling was becoming more nightmarish; more and more absurd; for no one knew what was happening; and yet everyone was behaving as if the war was begun. Mr Hartman had turned his barn into a hospital and so on. Of course we thought it was ridiculous; yet still they went on broadcasting messages about leaving London; about post cards with stamps being given to refuggess who would be deposited safely, but they must no ask where. At any moment the fifty children might arrive. Also the Archbishop would offer up prayers; and at one moment the Pope's voice was heard...But I will shorten; and skip to Sissinghurst; where wewent on Thursday; and heard that the Italian King had saved the situation by threatning to abdicate. Harodl had seen the PM grow visibly ten years younger as he read the message which was handed him. It was all over. And I must play bowls. Leonard sends a message to Q; in his opinion we have peace without honour for six months.

Ill write again. Maynard comes tomoorrow. Plans vague; but wewrite here , where we shall probably stay at present.

a 48

1930

Monks House, Monday, October 3rd.

Ive just got your second letter, from Cassis. You say you would like gossip about the inner history, so I'll use my fragment of time before lunch--I'm trying to describe the first PIP show without success--- to go on with my scrambled and inarticulate story. Everything is still incoherent; but you'll excuse...

Well, I think I broke off at Sissinghurst last Thursday. We found that Harold had been kept in London, to arrange a counterblast to Chamb. with Eden, Churchill &c. He had just run up Vita and said she was to show us his diary. This was very interesting. They had all been convinced that war was inevitable. The cabinet had tried to control Chamb--the younger members. They were certain he was going to sell us. However off he flew. When the House met that Wednesday they all believed it was to announce war. He spoke very wearily yet precisely, like a business man making a statement. Then they saw the note handed him. He lit up, looked ten years younger, made his announcement; whereupon they all went mad, threw hats in the air, rushed about the lobbies shouting. That was all he knew when he wrote. Then Vita showed us the great barn with windows covered with frames that didnt fit and doors half sealed. Thirty people were to sleep there. I forget how many children were to be put up in hop oasts. The farmer arrived to ask what was now to be done. The Gwen St Aubyn arrived from Lewes; she had been taking her daughters school from London to Stanmer Park, which Lady Chichester had given over; and sixty girls were already lying in the picture gallery on mattreeses, and blackboards were ready for next days lessons. Miracles of

of organisation had been performed by everyone. The roads, sh said were crowded with lorries full of escaping schools. Vita said it was known for certain that London was to be attacked at twenty minutes intervals for twenty four hours with gas and bombs. Also that Mussolini had been stiffened at hthe last moment by The King of Italy who had said he would abdicate. Hence his pressure upon Hitler; which had turned the tide at the last moment. We came back, half expecting to find our refugees waiting us at Monks House. Mercifully there was no one. Then next day we all turned rather cyni cal, and were sure of peace with dishonour. Then the BBc kept on saying that nothing was safe; we were all to go on expecting war; until finally Chamberlain arrived; and we heard him read the terms from Heston; frantic cheers; hysterical cries from old ladies; then the Archishop praying; then bells pealing; while here at Rodmell a service was hastily got up; our bells made a perfectly infernal din; Mrs Ebbs in vain tried to whip up the villagers to some excitement; but one and all they remained perfectly sure that it was a dirty business; and meant only another war when we should be unable to resist. Of course the country was much calmer than London. Leonard was amazed by the sagacity of the old gaffers. The Postman stayed and talked good deal for about half an hour. The BBC however still announced that all reptiles would be shot at the Zoo; and any tiger that escaped killed at sight. I think they were so proud of their organisation that they wantd to air it,

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though it began to leak out that the air defence had been found full of holes; and that the carnage would have been immense in London.

Yesterday

Yesterday the Keynes came to tea. Maynard had already summed up the situation in a very good article which he read us; I'll send you the N. S on Friday in which it appears. His view as that the whole thing was staged by Chamb.; that there as never any fear of war; that he never even consulted Russia; that it was a put up job between him and Hitler; that he would now call a general election; that our business is to fight Chamberlain; that we are sure of peace during our life time; that Hitler wants the Ukraine; that he'll get it; that Italy will be wiped out. that we shall do a deal with the colonies; that Chamberlain is a mere Birminhgam politician; and so on. We all analysed our complexities of shame, fear; Lydia said Maynard had really been a great deal alarmed; and excited. Of course the truth was that one felt all along that Chamb. had something up his sleeve; only one couldnt say how much. Also the feeling of despair and coming death was very gemuine in London, however irrational. I am proud to say that my last words on leaving the Press were "There wont be war" but I was hooted down. I suppose everyone, except Kingsley Martin, chopped and changed. For instance some of the Gordon Square pundits--freinds of Maynards-- refused to agree to trenches being dug in the square. On the other hand, The whole Royal Society has fled to the country; and

Cambridge was so disorganised--all the collges fitted up as hospitals--that it has had to put off term for some days. If it was all a piece of stage management on Chambs part, he took in a great many authorities. But y u'll have had enough of this, and I expect I am sending , as you would say, coals to Birmingham. Duff Cooper, much to Maynards surprise and admiration, has resigned. There is now going to be a great reaction agianst the terms; and I'm afraid that L. will be drawn in. Already John wants us to go to London to discuss plans for the Press tomorrow. But we mean to stay here at all costs this week. The hubbub is incessant in London; and one simply repeats the same thing, and is exposed to all the bray of all the donkeys. The weather has completely broken up; we have gales and tremendous ~~pelts~~ pelts of rain. Its been very difficult to settle down to work, even here; I wish I could get to S. Remi, but I feel I ought to work hard here for a week or two, as I'm at rather a critical point. Also we had promised to travel the books in the West--- happily we're free fron the Press today; John has taken over. So theres no need to make any fixed plans. Ann has just rung up to ask if she and Richard may come for the week end. Its death having people to stay but I suppose we must. Now I must go into the house through the rain and the falling apples to lunch. The tweeds have just arrived. I will keep them. And its pelting with rain--marshes all a mist, cows sheltering, aeropanes still booming; cold mutton and apples for dinner. I'll add a less frantic line before I send this.

But I dont think there's anything to add - Except tell P., that Mrs Larter, the schoolmistress, has left the Labour Party & formed Conservative - so she told Lottie. The K's are off to Leydon Hall at Cambridge. I'll write again. Immense relief that you're safe. France must have been in some ways worse than England - Please write here B

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To Vanessa Bell

Monks House Saturday Oct 8th

Your letter has just come; and I at once answer, moved by flattery partly--for I dont think you like reading my letters; Im very modest at the moment; also, if I dont start, I shall get swamped; Davies arriving: then London; household supplies--partidges, hare, possible goose--all imperfect. Lord, what a scrimmage---But to facts.

You say you want details. England has now settled down to the usual cat and dog; I mean, I told you so, its your fault no its not; Kettle yourself; pot yourself, or whatevs the phrase is. Trenches were dug because if you lie at the bottom of a sloping hole, a shell will burst at either side and miss you. Two workmen were buried alive making them. As for gas masks, many have died through testing them on the exhaust pipes of cars. Govt; has now issued an edict that theyre not to be tried on gas pipes as they dont work. Black boxes are being issued to keep them in against the next war. Some grateful owners have paid the Treasury one guinea apeiece. Ours lie on the drawing room table.

I did not say the press was fortifying my studio; I said the stock room. This is a firmly bxxkx x built stone lined compartment behind the front room; most suitable, therefore as Miss perkins said. Lined with books and matresses practically impregnable. However as I told you Mr Higham wouldnt issue the key of the square to non-residents, so our trnches were useless for Mrs Nicholls. Next Clive Bell. Here I draw attention to a curious psychological incident, which the united brains of Bassis can analyse— if I can get time to explian. We asked xxxx Keynses to sunday tea, and told them to fetch Clive, also invited. Lydia rang up to say "Janice is there; we will not have Janice." I said, "Settle it yourselves--Ive asked Clive." They came shamefaced and sheepish. "Clive is not coming." "Have you told him the you wont have Janice?' 'No.' 'Then what happened?' 'He will not come. I said 'She will bring him'. 'No he will not come.' Sure enough he didnt come. Now what had Lydia really done about it? Anyhow he neither came nor answered; solve not heard about the Beefsteak club. Tilton agreed to take six children. I am sending the N.S. Q's letter has never come; rumour says he used it to wipe the bottom of a goose; but rumour is xxx a strumpet.

Oh the vintage! Just what my eyes crack to see. The one thing in the world I was born to describe. The one scene I need for my book. But consider my predicament. Owing to one thing and another, bowls, crisis, native sloth, I'm only at 1911 in Roger; I cant increase the appalling muddle of that book by darting off a chapter about S. Remi; I'm flummoxed entirely how to deal with your own letters. I shall be ready in December. Then no lines. Marie has just sent me her novel. No time yet to read it. I wish youd find out when we could go for a week or so to their Inn. If theres a room to write in. If they would have us peacefully. L; says its no use till middle of March owing to Mistral. Is this true? But as I was saying, how am I to write this book? What am I to say about you? Its rather as if I had to

Bou

to paint a portrait using dozens of snapshots in the paint. Ei ther one ought to dash it off freehand, red, green, purple out of ones inner eye; or toil like a fly over a loaf of bread, As it is I'm compromising; and its a muddle; and unreadable; and will have to be used, like the letter, to wipe a gooses rump. But Roger himself is so magnificent, I'm so in love with him; and see dimly such a masterpiece that cant be painted, that on I go. Also, reading his books one after anoeht I realise that he's the only great critic that ever lived. For instance Cezanne--a miracle. French Art--another. Why did one only read his little articles? So, as you see, on I go; and grumble; and sweat; and sometimes get so hot in the head I roll in the cabbage bed. Do give me some views; how to deal with love so that we're not all blushing.

Shall I send you books? I am writing with your letter before me, and thus hop from twig to twig. Theyre bringing out a book on Jhn Cornford next week, practically identical with Julians poems, essays &c. Shall I send it? I'll give L. the addresses. At present, Jon is more worry than help; incessant questions; we have to go up for the day on Tuesday; then back for four days; then I think settle in for the winter and work. at 52. We get snatches of divine loneliness here; a day or two; and sanguine as I am I said to L. as we strolled through the mushroom fields, Thank the Lord, we shall be alone ; we'll play bowls; then I shall read evigne; then have grilled ham and mushrooms for dinner; then Mozart--- and why not stay here for ever and ever, enjoying this immortal rhythm, in which both eye and soul are at rest? So I said, and for once L. said, Youre not such a fool as you seem. We were so sane; so happy; and then, I went in; put the kettle on; ran up stairs looked at the room; am almost done; fireplace lovely; wood wrong stained; but still felt floating on the wings of peace. ade tea; got out a new loaf; and honey and was about to call in L from the ladder on the high tree--where he looked so beautiful my heart stood stillwith pride that he ever married me; and then..... A face at the window. A voice. May we come in, Virginia? A jersey; trousers; bright red cheeks; glassy blue eyes. Barbara ....an interval of sheer horror; of untmitagetd despair; my life crashed; my soul broke; my tongue faltered; and there was Nick....

So we had them both for four hours by the clock. Lodging with Mrs Curtis they had tried to find you; were told by the pistmas (I mean postman) Charleston was empty; so came without the decency of a card or a telephone; planted their dismality on me. Such a crude xxxx brutality, such denial of all human decency seems to me so unthinkably bestial that after theyd gone--and we had to drive them to Firle--I let fly; and for hours L, and I argued; he thought me too harsh; I thought him deplorably sentimental. But we both agreed that the poor Bags are in the lowest rung of life; water blooded; blowsy; grumpy; servile; their eyes all flies; one drip drip xdrip of complaint from ~~arabra~~ Barbara Judith such a trail; no freinds; boys so stupid; cant pass

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exams; no money; no servants; no freinds; and of course none of it said rhymically like this, with some arch to the back; but all verfied and stated in words like hard boiled eggs; so that there I sat staring. L. took Nick round the garden. Nick too niggles. Not a drop of hope or health in them; and so we settled like creeping flies on Saxon, who at least excites B's bitterness; she found him a flat at Greenwich; why wont he face the fact that he must live there? Wont have money to go to the Opera. Has the eczema on his hands. Over eating. Yes, maned Nick--he s terribly greedy. Eats grouse alone. Not a grouse had come their way these ten years. And why should it? And theyd no milk, nor eggs; had picked twnety dead mushrooms by way of gift; and I had to explore Itford Farm in the twilight, with Nick, to furbish up their miserable larder. But enough. Poor things--- its a death to your door; the refrain was always Nessa and Duncan--Angelica and Quentin, as if you had obsessed them and dispossessed them. Tell Angelica, Judith considers her the only freind she has; "But of coyrse Angelica never invites her now...." Oh God, god, what world is there dispeopled, solitary, sane, where I could merely sit down, take my Bellows dictionary and even write a letter to J. E Blanche, who complains, like them all that Vanessa Bell was lunching with Miss Sands and they didnt ask him. Ive a letter from Will Rothenstein too, from Herbert Fisher also; and yestderady we had tea with the Keynesa dxxx (you see thats a word that cant be spelt on a type writer) our friends at Tilton; and L. read them his play; They seemed rather impressed; they think the Group may do it. I thought it rather good too; but who am I? I never get any praise for what I write. Mortimer praises Elizabeth Bowens new novel. But I'm not jealous; too far sunk intb fritters, with Ann and Richard coming to feel more than a drowned cat feels when it has been pulled from the ice by a policeman. However we have a grouse for lunch. Maynard is a great man, I rather think. They had caught three mice in one trap; this excited him to the verge of hysteria. Now thats true greatness; combined as it is with buying a whole flock of sheep; ditto of cows; he had been also dictating a letter to the Times; is overcoming the immumerable actors and actresses who wont act Phedre; they will act Phedre; had also a complete knowledge of Tuberculosis in cows; meanwhile gave permission for Auntie to drive with Edgar to Lewes to buy stcokings; all details are refrred to him; yet he remains dominant, calm; intent as a terrier to every word of Ls play; spotted at sight things Id never seen from sheer vacancy; and left me crushed but soaring with hope for a race that breeds men like Maynard. And I kissed him and praised to the skys his Memoir Club paper; by which, most oddly to my thinking, he was really pleased. D'you ever feel such a worm as I almost always feeL? Or are you always as beautiful as I thought you the last night at Charleston, when I could hardly breathe for fear of unsettling the magnificent human Camberwell beauty who was , I suppose, mending socks?

Nothing to add at the moment which is pouring; electric light off; storms universal.

Barbara told me Pamela had been almost mad from suspense about Micou.b eing a Roumnian being interned in late crisis; but B's almost ma/ menas meere common sense.

Write Dophin; and tell the young Dophins to follow in your blue wake. Q and A. that is. Old ,ather Dolphin by whom I indicate the real Duncan might one would have thought have turned his brush to a better use/ -old sakes sake.

And then when I hear Ill once more scribble.

B

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12/29/69